

# SUSTAINABILITY DEMYSTIFIED!

A PRACTICAL GUIDE FOR BUSINESS LEADERS, MANAGERS, AND OWNERS



# WELCOME TO SUSTAINABILITY DEMYSTIFIED!

Enjoy the opportunity to transform your organization and take it to a higher level of performance and leadership!

The book has been written as a practitioner's guide for business and organizational leaders, managers, and owners about sustainable development best practices – what works and why! The small to medium-size enterprise (SME) is the primary focus of this book. Many larger companies and corporations already have the resources and capacity to successfully implement and imbed sustainable development best practices within their organizations. However, sustainable development best practices can also be applied by smaller to medium size enterprises including family owned businesses, non-profit organizations, academic institutions, as well as municipalities with the same or even improved performance and results.

The practitioner's guide has been developed by looking at the primary functions of a SME including: administration and management; design, engineering, and technology; operations and manufacturing; marketing and sales; finance and accounting; supply chain management; and information technology. There are 24 sustainable development best practices that can be found within these 7 primary business functions.

Each of the sustainable development best practices is covered in the same context for consistency and illustration. First, an introduction to the sustainable development best practice is provided. Next, there is a description of the sustainable development system or process to be used. Areas of business applications for the sustainable development practice are then reviewed. Expected results and anticipated benefits with the use of the best practice are described next. A case study then follows. Local area case studies have been used wherever possible to help others in our region understand how sustainable development best practices have been successfully used in our West Michigan community. Finally, there is a call to action for the business and organization leader at the end of the discussion of each sustainable development best practices. This call to action includes 4-6 questions that will help stimulate and encourage the business and enterprise to take the next steps.

Business leaders and general managers can look at sustainable development best practices in the context of the entire company or organization. Business directors and department heads can review specific sustainable development best practices that are applicable to their functional business area of interest.

Sustainability Demystified! is not about the author. The book is about the hard work and effort that has been demonstrated and achieved by the many successful companies in West Michigan. I hope you enjoy the reading, understanding, and implementation of sustainable development best practices through the wonderful stories, case studies, and sustainability conversations contained in the book.

Begin your sustainability journey, stay the course, and realize your accomplishments and success!

Norman Christopher,  
Director of Sustainability  
Grand Valley State University

# SUSTAINABILITY DEMYSTIFIED!

**The explosive growth of Internet job creation points to an even brighter future in sustainability. Just as the Internet transformed our lives, those adopting sustainability best practices are improving their bottom lines while becoming more effective environmental stewards and better corporate citizens**

To realize the growing importance of sustainability in driving the economy of the future, one need only go back to the late 1990s as the Internet began its spectacular growth. At the time no one really knew what impact the Web would have on our personal lifestyles, our company and business operations, global economic growth, and future employment opportunities. According to McKinsey and Company, through their McKinsey Global Institute report entitled Internet Matters, the Net has:

- Been a strong contributor to wealth creation
- Provided the economy with growth through both consumption and expenditures
- Significantly contributed to job creation
- Powerfully driven innovation, creativity, and modernization
- Allowed people, organizations and governments to reach out to nearly everyone on the planet

In addition, statistics compiled from 13 countries and 4800 small to medium size businesses state that the Internet:

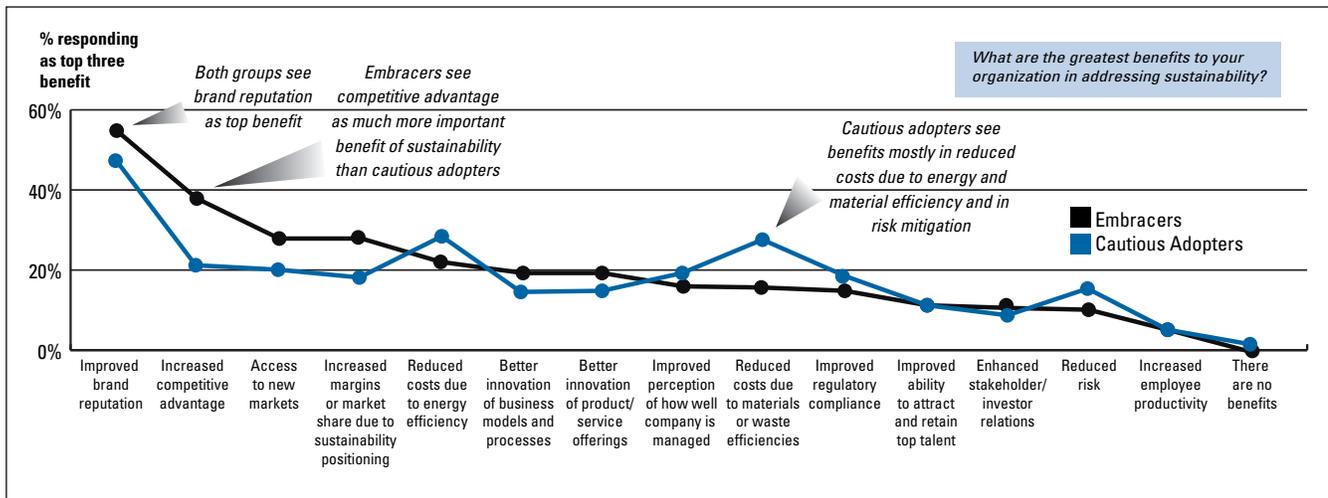
- Accounts for 3.4% of GDP and 10% of GDP growth over the last 15 years
- Created 1.2 million jobs, while terminating 500,000 other jobs, for a net gain of 2.4 new jobs for every job lost
- Provided upwards of \$15-\$20 per month of value creation per user with an estimated \$64 billion of consumer surplus in the United States

**“The more of the mystery that we can take out of sustainability, the more that can be accomplished. This practical guide will allow business leaders who have achieved some level of sustainability to improve their performance even more.”**

Mike Olthoff, President of Nichols Inc., Muskegon, MI

**“Over 95 percent of companies in North America are small to medium size firms. Until now there has been no practical guide to help them reap the benefits of sustainability strategies. Packed with relevant examples, lessons learned, and pragmatic guidance, *Sustainability Demystified!* is a must read for any small to medium size business leader. Perfect!”**

Bob Willard, Author of *The Sustainability Advantage*



**“Sustainability Demystified! is an indispensable guide and tool for businesses looking to implement sustainability practices today and in their strategic planning. It translates triple bottom line practices into performance in a way that your business can compete and win.”**

Rick Baker, President and CEO of the Grand Rapids Chamber of Commerce

**“This book describes the finer points of sustainability and the required hard work to get there. By implementing the best practices that are described, businesses can improve the overall efficiency of their operations.”**

Mark Lindquist, President of Rapid-Line Manufacturing, Grand Rapids, MI

Now, as we reflect back on sustainable development over the last 15+ years we find many of the highlights for sustainable development paralleling those of the internet. Today sustainable development best practices are being implemented by many organizations and enterprises across the public, private, and academic sectors and gaining traction across many sectors of our economy:

- Larger businesses are being impacted by sustainable development and the global economy.
- Small to medium-size businesses are being impacted by sustainable development best practices through supply chain management and the need to generate cost savings and improved efficiencies.

The overall impact of sustainable development can be seen in the creation of new jobs both nationally and regionally; a large and growing marketplace for sustainable products, goods, and services for consumers and industrial customers; the use of creative and innovative disruptive clean technologies that offer competitive marketplace positioning; and the ability to create short term efficiencies and long term collective value and impact through the use of sustainable development best practices.

**Even though its roots in West Michigan extend back fifty years, today the growth in the sustainability marketplace now outstrips most other sectors in the economy.**

- Currently sustainability is growing at 8-10 percent per year and is estimated at over \$300 billion, as new markets for new sustainable and green products and services are also being identified and tracked.
- Business spending on sustainability is also now being reported and is expected to grow from over \$25 billion in 2009 to \$60 billion in 2014, for an annual average growth rate of nearly 20% among over 1800 companies with sales greater than \$1 billion.
- According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS), there are at least 3.1 million “green” jobs in the U.S., according to a recent survey that was undertaken in 2010, with an estimated 2.3 million jobs in the private sector and an estimated 860,300 jobs in the public sector.

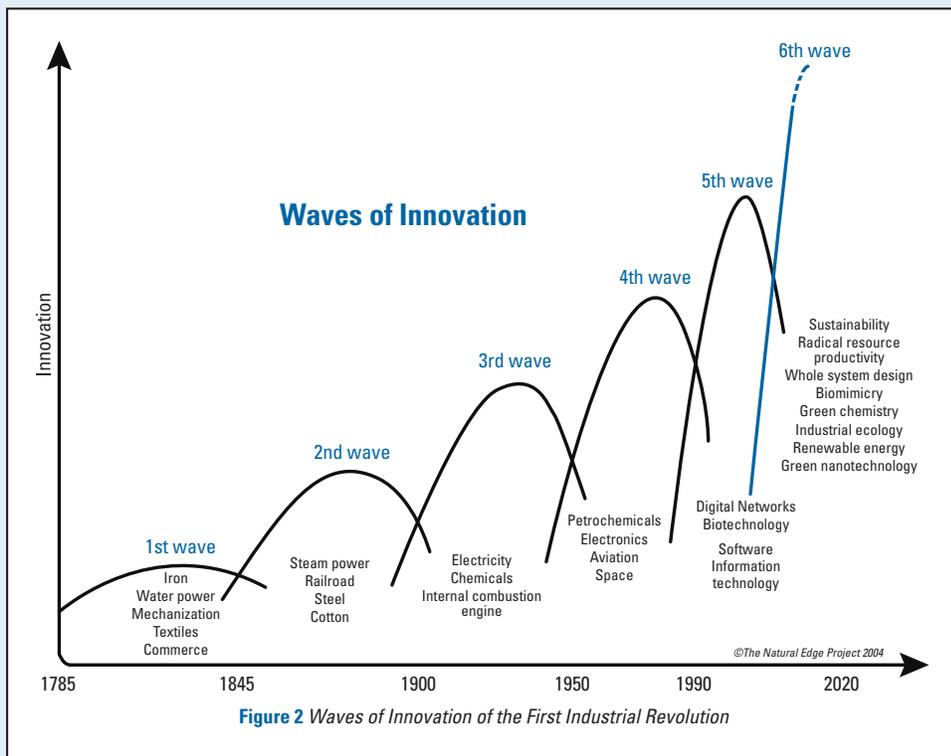
These “green” jobs represent about 2.4 percent of the nation’s total employment according to a report entitled “Employment in Green Goods and Services—2010.” This represents the first time that the BLS has undertaken such

“The United States Green Building Council’s Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) has been and continues to be very important to West Michigan’s leadership in the green building movement. Norman Christopher has captured the sustainability best practices and examples so desperately needed to improve overall business performance.”

Renaee Hesselink, Past Chair of the West Michigan Chapter of the USGBC

“Norman Christopher has been a catalyst in the field of sustainability in West Michigan, bringing together leaders from the business, government, education, and non-profit sectors. *Demystifying Sustainability!* is a practical, hands-on approach to the application of the many principles of sustainability as they touch all aspects of business.”

Brad Thomas, President, Progressive AE

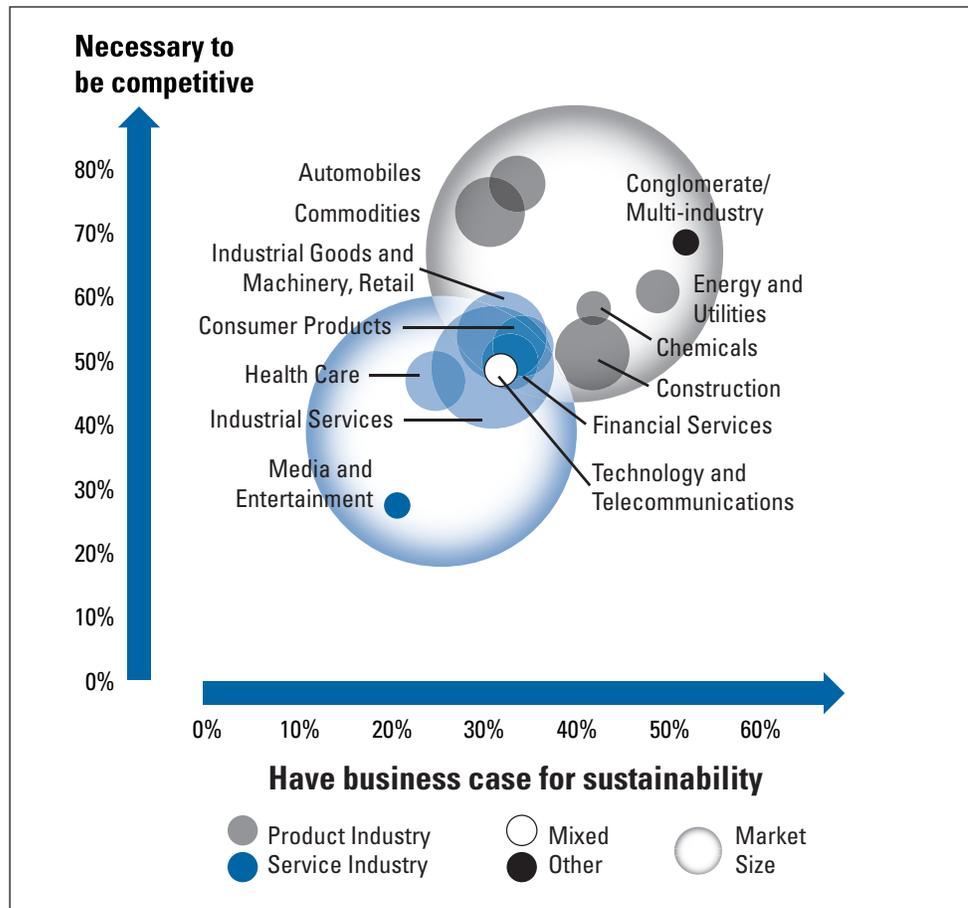


*"Sustainability Demystified!* is a comprehensive practical toolbox that addresses all aspects of the sustainability triple bottom line in a succinct way. What sets Norman Christopher's book apart is the array of tools and best practices for small to medium size businesses. I would strongly recommend using this book for a foundation course in any graduate program. We plan to use it at our university."

Dr. Jaideep Motwani, Chair and Professor of management, Seidman College of Business, Grand Valley State University

*"Sustainability, while crucial to future prosperity, has become an overused buzzword, meaning everything from waste reduction to poverty. In this excellent and practical guide, Norman Christopher really does demystify sustainability, making it something that companies can not only aspire to, but reduce to practice."*

Stuart L. Hart, Cornell University, Author of *Capitalism at the Crossroads*



a survey that reported an official count of environmentally friendly jobs. The survey was undertaken among 120,000 business and government entities in 333 industries. "Green" and sustainability jobs are now seen as a key piece of the developing and emerging new economy in the U.S. This report only described "output based jobs" or those jobs that produce or are associated with the production of goods and services that benefit the environment or help conserve natural resources. A second report will be forthcoming that includes "process based jobs" as well.

In this report, how does Michigan fare? Michigan ranks 12th as a state with a total of nearly 80,000 "green" jobs for an estimated 2.1 percent of the state's total employment. Over 64,000 of these jobs were in the private sector representing over 80 percent of total employment. The greatest percentage of these "green" jobs was found in the construction, natural resources and mining, and manufacturing industries.

The acceptance of sustainable development best practices by business has been steadily gaining traction and momentum and shows no sign of slowing down. Ernst and Young and GreenBiz Group issued a report in March 2012 entitled “Six Growing Trends in Corporate Sustainability.” The report identified that nearly three out of every four responding companies (add the word “surveyed”) said cost savings and cost reduction were key drivers in the sustainability planning and (add the word “that”) 60 percent of these same companies indicated that risk management was a key driver.

The Boston Consulting Group in conjunction with the Sloan Management Review have also undertaken several noteworthy sustainability studies over the last few years that have tracked the growing demand and importance of sustainable development best practices. They have recently completed another study entitled “2011 Sustainability and Innovation Global Executive Study and Research Project” that surveyed over 4,000 managers from 113 countries with the following highlights:

- Sustainability has reached a turning and tipping point
- Two thirds of the companies interviewed say that they will be doing more
- Seven out of ten companies say sustainability has now been incorporated and embedded into their permanent management agenda
- Two thirds of the companies now say sustainability is a must for being competitive in today’s marketplace

Sustainability is not going away today nor will it tomorrow. The increased use of sustainable development best practices will only continue to grow and be used by companies of all sizes in the public, private, and academic sectors.

The reasons for the use of these best practices will be many and include:

- The ability to generate cost savings and efficiencies as well as create value.
- The need to improve competitiveness.
- A desire to become better environmental stewards.
- The importance of being seen as socially responsible and a good corporate citizen.

All successful companies strive to invigorate their organizations through fresh visions and effective strategic plans. This need to continually innovate and improve operations is leading to widespread adoption of sustainable development best practices.

**“Sustainability has in many ways become an overused “buzzword,” masking a very serious subject that requires commitment on the part of companies, communities, and individuals. Sustainability and the triple bottom line are well on their way to becoming what “lean manufacturing practices” are already, an expected way of doing business.”**

Birgit Klohs, President and CEO of the Right Place Inc.

**“Before most of us could spell sustainability, Grand Valley State University, under Norman Christopher’s leadership was far advanced in practice. This seminal book—coming as it does early in the sustainability movement—will rapidly become a classic in the field. Read it and be inspired.”**

George Heartwell, Mayor, City of Grand Rapids Michigan

**“Ten years ago, there were only a handful of books on sustainability and they were mostly described theoretical premises. This book effectively distills the hundreds of books on Sustainability into a practical, readable guide that allows the practitioner to make sense of this emerging field of discourse”**

Fred Keller, President and CEO Cascade Engineering

**“Sustainability has become a business imperative. This book provides a valuable “essentials guide” to forward thinking business owners interested in staying one step ahead of the competition in the growing green economy.”**

Peter Perez, Deputy Assistant Secretary, Office of Manufacturing, U.S. Department of Commerce

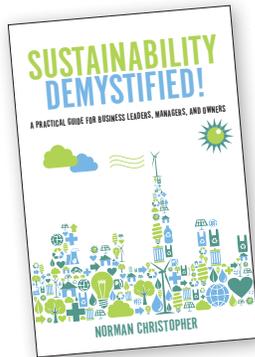
**“This practical guide will show the small business owner the ability to view his or her business from a different and strategic set of eyes. The entrepreneur will be able to assess their business, develop a sustainability plan, and implement new strategies for their business operations.”**

Dante Villareal, Director, West Michigan Small Business Technology Development Center

**“Sustainability Demystified introduces businesspeople, regardless of industry or sector, to sustainable business practices. Whether you work for a small or large company, in banking or retail, in Michigan or Texas, there are lessons that can be gained that can immediately be applied to your business.”**

Kyle Denning, Managing Partner Sustainable Energy Financing LLC

## Announcing



### **Sustainability Demystified! A Practical Guide for Business Leaders, Managers, and Owners by Norman Christopher**

The West Michigan Strategic Alliance (WMSA), launched in the year 2000 under the guidance of Jim Brooks, originally described West Michigan as a region in transition. Over ten years ago, with a volunteer force of approximately 250 in collaboration partnership with the organization, WMSA

had the foresight, in its report *For a Common Framework*, to embrace three guiding forces of sustainability in its list of regional priorities:

- Economic Prosperity
- Environmental Integrity
- Social Justice

The report predicted West Michigan could become a “best place to live, learn, work and play.”

Now, as envisioned, West Michigan has made significant progress on its sustainability journey and has received noteworthy recognition for these efforts.

West Michigan now stands to become a leader in the sustainability community and reap the benefits that come with leadership. *Sustainability Demystified!* provides the practical help and tools required for businesses of all sizes to explore and implement the sustainability best practices many industry leading firms now enjoy.

### **Breakthrough Book Brings Sustainability Best Practices to Small to Medium Sized Businesses and Organizations**

Using West Michigan as a benchmark, *Sustainability Demystified!* can help any size organization, no matter where it is located, to reap the benefits that come from adopting sustainability best practices.

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